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WORLD EDUCATION

Civic Action In School Environment (CASE) Project

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Introduction

The Civic Action in the School Environment, executed by World Education, operates within the framework of USAID's Global Strategic Objective: More children receive on an equitable basis a quality basic education. The project builds on the work of the USAID-funded PENGOP project (Phases I & II), also carried out by World Education which began in October 1994 and ended in September 2003. That project strengthened parents associations (Associations des parents Elèves, APE in over 1,300 schools and raised the APE movement to a truly national level as a legitimate stakeholder partner in the formal education system of the country.

Started in October 2003 for a period of two years, the CASE project aims at achieving the following Strategic Objective: ***“Increased participation of civil society in the design and management of the primary education system in Benin”***. Intermediate (IR) and sub- results (SubIR) are the following:

- ***IR1: An improved legal and institutional environment that is favorable for full parental participation in the education system.***
 - ✓ *SubIR1.1: APE federations perform well as institutions, administratively, financially and programmatically.*
 - ✓ *SubIR1.2: Rules and procedures governing the awarding and management of school infrastructure project contracts ensure that the lead role of the A.P.E. and AME is guaranteed.*
 - ✓ *SubIR1.3: A.P.E. federations play a major role in the development of communal education work plans and budgets.*

IR1 builds on World Education's experience and extends the aim of PENGOP to create favorable conditions that allow the parents' movement to operate to its fullest potential in the education system.

- ***IR2: Parents' movement is representative of all parents and ensures that priority is given to gender equity and cultural constraints on girls' education***
 - ✓ *SubIR2.1: Mothers begin to play an important role in school affairs, through their participation in A.M.E.s and A.P.E.s.*
 - ✓ *SubIR2.2: Strengthened AMEs and APEs create a more favorable socio-economic environment for girls education at community, district, regional and national.*

IR2 introduces a strategic framework that will be constructed locally, tested, and will effectively involve women as full civil society participants in the design and management of the education system.

Cross-cutting activities are related to the fight against HIV/AIDS with the objective of having all the project's actors involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the school environment. Specifically, CASE will intervene to:

- Help APE and AME members to gain more knowledge about HIV/AIDS;
- To adopt "best practices" in the fight against the disease, and the stigma caused by the disease in their communities;
- To reinforce positive attitudes, skills and practices that will allow APE and AME members to play key roles in dealing with the disease in their community; and

- Promote (through lobbying) the adoption of "Life Skills" as an official part of the primary school curriculum and in teacher training.

World Education is proud to present the CASE project's first annual report. It contains a discussion on each intermediate result, some success stories, a follow up of progress made towards achieving planned outputs and activities planned for the second year (October 2004 – September 2005).

Legal and institutional environment favorable for full parental participation in the education system (IR-1)

Our work to improve the legal and institutional environment for stakeholder involvement has been complicated by the fact that new legislation has been passed by the Benin National Assembly but not yet implemented by the concerned ministries that sets the future directions for the education sector in Benin. While the new legislation favors a more substantial stakeholder involvement in the sector, old practices continue while education ministry officials and school administrators await clear instructions as to how the new law is to be applied.

Following a meeting between the ministry of education and FENAPEB, the Education Minister offered the idea of organizing ongoing days of reflection to discuss about existing regulations on the involving civil society in school issues, with the objective of making them fit with the new national education law which recognize the right for the parents to participate in school affairs. With the support of CASE, the reflection days were planned by FENAPEB. The Education Minister established a planning committee but, due to the failure of FENAPEB to follow through on the planning process, this committee never held its first meeting. However, as a prelude to the reflection days, a collection of key documents and current laws related to the involvement of parents in school affairs was compiled.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Educations Department of Audit and Verification (DIVI), for example, has not yet agreed to move forward on a series of joint training sessions that were to cover the nation, dealing with School Co-Management principles and begun during the project's second quarter, until the new administrative guidelines based on the recent legislation comes out from the ministry. They are also refusing to accept the maximum per diem rates World Education can pay under its agreement with USAID, preferring the unilaterally declared Benin government rate, which is substantially higher. Negotiations continue.

From the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year, MEPS circulated a letter forbidding any kind of deduction from the funds provided to schools by social programs, including deduction in favor of the APE. Following a bit of lobbying, the parents succeeded in changing the position of the Minister. A revised letter was circulated; this letter authorizes deductions but in favor of the APE.

APE federations perform well as institutions (Sub IR1.1)

In the area of stakeholder institution strengthening, work has moved ahead through parents themselves diagnosing the various problems besetting the regional and national parents association federations (the six FEDAPEs and the FENAPEB), and developing recommended reforms to improve the operational and institutional effectiveness.

The significance of this work should not be underestimated. But the next step, the actual adoption and application of the reforms has been blocked by a group of federation members who feel they have too much to lose if the changes go ahead.

Serious structural problems characterize the parents' federations, which were established with USAID's assistance in 1995. Perhaps the most serious is that although it is clearly stated in the FENAPEB statutes (Article 8) that its members are the federation's constituent bodies, the regional federations (i.e., organizations, not people (sort of like the United Nations)). In fact, the federation is administered and operated by individual members (overwhelmingly elderly males) who are elected in their personal capacities (most of whom have continued to be "members" since 1995!) Worse, these people (who are no longer, by and large, school parents) resist any attempt at limiting the number of terms they can serve in office.

Another very important problem is the centralization of responsibilities from various levels of the organization in a small group of people. It is not uncommon that one person holds several important positions at the community level and at the three other levels (commune, department, national). The result is a lack of efficiency due to unavailability and the absence of transparency. In effect the same people play the roles of the judge and the accused. In evaluating the performance of the federation structures, it is difficult for these individuals to facilitate a discussion at all levels. This is reinforced by a voting system by electoral representatives essentially composed of a nucleus of people who have dominated the system since the birth of the organization.

Given this institution's confusion, and the stronger than anticipated resistance to reform from the current (illegal) occupiers of the national parents organization's governing structures, it is not surprising that the members at the regional and commune levels refuse to pass on the dues they have raised to the national federation, which is being starved by a lack of financial revenues necessary for it to function. The same is true for the regional federations, most of which are lacking the operational funds that are due to them from the communes and the individual APEs at the school level.

Taking into account the slow progress in the negotiations to implement the agreed reforms, a three-party meeting was held with USAID, World Education, and FENAPEB. FENAPEB proposed a partnership code but, unfortunately, after two months the resulting document demonstrated no effort by FENAPEB to proceed with the necessary reforms. As a result, we engaged USAID in discussions concerning our strategy of strengthening FENAPEB. The outcome should be a reduction in institutional support; the objectives of USAID will not be attained without reform. Also, will our support to the federations be limited to training and technical and financial assistance to encourage lobbying activities in favor of village APE and the education system in general.

Rules and procedures governing awarding and management of school infrastructure projects ensure that lead role of APE is guaranteed (Sub IR1.2)

Benin is currently in the process of decentralizing its governance structures with elected commune councils increasingly becoming the key players in governing the residents of their respective areas.

In the education sector, however, the decentralization is so far limited to questions of infrastructure (construction and maintenance of buildings and equipment).

The law governing the awards of public works states that the mayor is responsible for all the process. No steps were taken to include parents' associations in an explicit manner. However, every mayor of a commune in which CASE operates has accepted an important role for the APE in projects to be co-financed by World Education. Advocacy activities are planned to make the majors issued official texts which involve parents' associations in the construction and maintenance of school infrastructure.

APE federations play major role in drawing up communal education work plans and budgets (Sub IR1.3)

Taking into account their competencies, the commune governments are tasked with formulating and implementing a development strategy. The decentralization laws are not explicit concerning the involvement of APE federations in the creation and implementation of an education plan.

However, the commune level parents "federations" (known as CAPEs), have been in many cases asked by the commune governments to be involved in drafting the education sector sections of the commune development plans.

In the communes of Djakotomey, Aplahoué, Kandi, Nikki and Pèrèrè, the education committees were created through the EQUIPE project. These groups operationalized certain aspects of the communal development plans involving education. In the pursuit of synergy, World Education closely monitored this process without disturbing the process, taking into account that EQUIPE began prior to CASE. However World Education contacted EQUIPE staff and was told that CASE will continue the education committee process where EQUIPE will cease operations.

Because EQUIPE did not intervene in the commune of Houéyogbé, and this commune did not yet have a development plan, World Education assisted the CAPE and the Director of the School District in mobilizing other actors to establish an educational development plan using a diagnostic and participatory planning process. This process benefitted from the support of communal authorities, who took into account the results when creating a development plan for the commune.

We would like to point out that in all the communes in which World Education operates, the CAPEs continue to play vital roles in resolving problems that affect their member APEs at the school level. In short, they play a very important, even vital role in insuring that parents as stakeholders are involved in education issues that affect themselves and their children.

The role of the regional federations (FEDAPEs) perhaps come into question as well, since the current political decentralization process does not give the regions any real legislative role. Regional administrative and technical services do have certain control and coordination functions, especially when in matters that may concern more than one commune. But there are no elected officials at the regional level; regional services are headed by civil servants named by the national ministries, and do the bidding of the central government or the president's direct representative in the regions, the *préfet*. For example, regional education officers (DDEPS) are essentially central education ministry functionaries. The regional parent bodies should, to be

more in harmony with this setup, be a technical service representing the national federation, not elected individuals from the communes (CAPEs) below them in the hierarchy, which have their own elected bodies who work with the elected communal councils.

It is for the reasons outlined above that World Education has decided to begin negotiations with USAID to modify the CASE project's planned second year activities to include more support to the commune level parent representative bodies, the CAPEs. The immediate future (at least) of the parents movement lies in reinforcing the decentralized federations at the commune level. When the current generation of founder-members of the national parents federation inevitably gives way to change forged from the grassroots, i.e., the communes, attention can return to strengthening formal parent-run institutions at higher levels. But that is not likely to happen until the end of the current terms of office of the founder-members, which expires in September 2005.

Parents' movement is representative of all parents and ensures that priority is given to gender equity and cultural constraints on girls' education (IR2)

The concept of mothers associations (AME) was introduced during a feedback workshop on the results of an AME study tour to Burkina Faso. Various actors in the Beninese education system participated in this workshop which permitted them to be involved in the design of a pilot program with 36 AME in Benin. Many recommendations were made, among which we would stress the following:

- do not impose the name AME in villages
- avoid confining the AME leadership to a typical organizational scheme adopted by APE
- APE should remain the recognized intermediary through which the AME should address their concerns
- ME will work in collaboration with APE; competition between AME and APE should be avoided
- Establish AME through a participatory diagnostic involving all relevant actors and lasting no longer than two days.

In accordance with the recommendations and in collaboration with the department and commune education authorities as well as the APE federations, six communes, including 36 villages, were selected for the pilot program.

The AME were established using a methodology comprised of several participatory diagnostic tools such as:

- Camembert (contribution of women and men to girls and boys education)
- Venn diagrams
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- General assembly (stakeholder) meetings, including establishment of a committee to organize the general assembly
- Establishment of village committees to conduct research
- Training of relevant actors to help conduct research (NGOs, CCS, CAPE, local elected leaders, APE)
- Village information

Mothers begin to play important role in school affairs, through their participation in AMEs and APEs (Sub IR2.1)

The introduction of the concept of AME has generated a high level of enthusiasm from stakeholders from all levels of the Benin education system, especially from the mothers themselves. Mothers of school children, largely excluded by men from meaningful involvement in their local school, have greeted the new organizations warmly. They are enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate in the national debate on education reform. They have mobilized themselves and the local APE as well, to tackle problems that had kept the school from playing its intended role in providing young people with the basic education they needed to become useful and productive citizens for the future.

The activities conducted with the AME were:

- Assessment of the participation of women in education
- Technical assistance for the implementation of a participatory assessment of primary education and local plans concerning education
- ERO/EAF of APE (organizational development assessment and follow-up)
- Training and technical assistance for the creation of a list of AME members
- Study tours of strategies used to promote children's education
- Assistance to define and adopt strategies promoting education
- Assistance for the preparation of microproject proposals to support school infrastructure
- Assistance to conduct a census of school-age children
- Development and distribution of radio programs about children's education
- Organization of sessions to listen to and discuss radio programs
- Training about HIV/AIDS and STDs

APE actively participated in the AME activities. AME also participated in the routine activities of the APE. With their participation, women substantially contributed to the improved functioning of the APE, as demonstrated in the microproject proposals for:

- School supplies
- Study rooms
- Establishment of a birth certificate for students without one
- School cooperative for fishing
- Creation of UVS
- Income generating activities (animal husbandry, gardening, food processing etc.)
- Village windmills to generate income and electricity for classrooms
- Water pumps
- Classrooms (construction and repair)
- Classroom furniture
- School cantines
- Village electricity grid
- Fencing around the school
- Latrines

Strengthened AMEs and APEs create a more favorable socio-economic environment for girls education community, district, regional and national (Sub IR2.2)

In response to the training and technical assistance provided by the project, the AME implemented several activities aimed to reduce sociocultural constraints on children's education in general and girls' education in particular. Some of these activities are:

- Census of school-age children
- Assistance to parents to acquire birth certificates for their children
- Return of previously abandoned children to school and follow-up
- Combating child trafficking
- Informal education activities for girl students
- Tracking of the academic performance of students
- Assistance to needy students
- Scholarships to the best students
- Establishment of a committee to monitor and regulate video clubs and youth activities at night
- Lobbying local authorities (government and traditional leaders)
- Lobbying fetish kings and queens for a balance between voodoo rituals and school demands
- School investment in health care kits
- Repair of the soccer fields
- General income generation activities

To date, AME have managed these activities with their own funds.

Success stories

1) Promotion of school attendance and combating child trafficking

Three schoolgirls from Kindji village, (Houéyogbé commune) were trafficked to Cotonou, where they were destined to be « vidomègon » (household servant girls) in Cotonou. Their names:

- VIASSOU Elise, aged 11 ;
- VIASSOU Solange, aged 10 ; and
- DANGBENON Lucienne, a CE2 (6th grade student), aged 11.

A decision was made in collaboration with the local APE that the AME would travel to Cotonou to recover the girls and get them back in school. DANGBENON Lucienne was returned to the village, and has re-enrolled in class. A committee was named by the APE and the AME to check out the conditions in which the girls are working and living in Cotonou. The committee paid many visits to cities where the village's children are and succeed in recovering six girls who are supposed to be enrolled in Kindji school during the 2004-2005 school year. Many other AME are also engaged in recovering children and getting them back to school.

2) Advocacy for the release of a schoolboy from the Voodoos convent and his re-enrollment in school

The Kindji AME set up a committee to negotiate the release from a voodoo cult "convent" of HOUNKPE Messounnou, a CE2 student aged 10. He has shown a lot of promise in his studies in the past, but was forced by his parents to leave the school for the convent a year ago. Arrangements

have been made so that the boy can leave the convent during the vacation period to start classes in October. The committee is composed of followers of the voodoo religion, and is supported by the school director. The group has been in direct negotiations with the leader of the voodoo cult, who is agreeable to the solution.

Based on this solution, the CAPE in Houéyogbé held a meeting with voodoo leaders in the commune. The main topic discussed was how to ensure a balance between voodoo rituals and the need for children to attend school. In a straightforward manner, the voodoo leaders decided to be more flexible about student situations and to only keep students in convents during school vacations.

3) Recruitment of a community teacher in the village of Pebie, in Kandi

Pebie is a village in Kandi in which the AME and the APE felt the need to break away from the biennial recruitment of students after assessing the number of children who could potentially be enrolled in school. The decision was taken near the end of school vacation and a community teacher was identified and sent to the district training for community teachers. A new class began, although the class was not officially recognized and the district education official did not accept the new community teacher sent by Pebie. However, after negotiations, the teacher was able to attend the training.

As with the Pebie village in Kandi, many other villages with AME have mobilized parents to enroll their children in school, but unfortunately the school capacity is generally inadequate.

4) Creation of a community school in Tasso-Peuhl

Tasso-Peuhl is a peulh's camp which is part of Tasso, a village of Nikki in the Northern East of Benin. In the frame of their activities, The School Mothers' Association of Tasso identified thirty children around six years old who have to start primary school during the opening school year. Given the fact that Tasso's primary school is far from the camp, initiatives were taken and with the support of many local stakeholders, the community primary school of Tasso was created. At the opening of the school in October 2004, twenty five pupils were registered. An experienced community school teacher was recruited for the pupils.

Outputs attained during year 1 and activities planned for year 2

The following table shows the progress made towards achieving planned outputs as well as it shows the activities planned for the second year. Activities outlined in the table are suggested to the approval of USAID because they are based on our on-going discussions on our federations strengthening strategy.

CASE project Outputs (Original and New)	Planned for Yr. 1	Completed Yr. 1	Now Planned Yr. 2	Originally Planned EOP	Now Planned for EOP	Difference between Original and Proposed Plans	Commentary
Revise ERO-EAF Assessment tools	2	2	1	2	3	1	
Resource people trained in use of ERO-EAF of federations	78	14	0	156	14	-142	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
Resource people trained in use of ERO-EAF tools for evaluations of CAPEs (New)			102	0	102	102	
Institutional Assessments of Federations Completed	14	7	0	28	7	-21	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
Institutional Assessments of CAPEs completed (New)	12	6	34	24	40	16	
Institutional strengthening plans for federations drafted	14	7	0	21	7	-14	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
Institutional strengthening plans for CAPEs drafted (New)	12	6	34	18	40	22	
Report on implementation federation plans drafted	7	1	0	14	1	-13	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
Report on implementation of CAPE pans drafted (New)	6	0	17	12	17	5	
Training sessions in lobbying techniques for APE federations	1	1	0	2	1	-1	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs

CASE project Outputs (Original and New)	Planned for Yr. 1	Completed Yr. 1	Now Planned Yr. 2	Originally Planned EOP	Now Planned for EOP	Difference between Original and Proposed Plans	Commentary
Training sessions in lobbying techniques for CAPEs (New)			6	0	6	6	
APE federation lobbying and other activities funded	1	2	7	2	9	7	
CAPE lobbying and other activities funded (New)			11	0	11	11	
Index of official texts and government regulations is updated and made available to key stakeholders	1	1	0	1	1	0	
New edition of APE reference manual is published	1	0	1	1	1	0	
New edition of reference manual is made available to key stakeholders			2000	2000	2000	0	
Manual on the administration and co-management of public primary schools is drafted	1	0	1	1	1	0	MEPS has delayed in providing guidelines for the activation of the new legislation on education
Co-management manuals made available to stakeholders	2000	0	2000	2000	2000	0	See above.
Protocol signed with DIVI, IFESH, World Education and FENAPEB for the training together of parents and school directors on the administration and co-management of schools	1	0	0	1	0	-1	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
Protocol signed between DIVI, IFESH and World Education for the training together of parents and school directors in the administration and co-management of public primary schools (New)			1	0	1	1	FENAPEB will not be part of protocol

CASE project Outputs (Original and New)	Planned for Yr. 1	Completed Yr. 1	Now Planned Yr. 2	Originally Planned EOP	Now Planned for EOP	Difference between Original and Proposed Plans	Commentary
Training sessions for joint training of directors and school parents carried out	16	2	18	32	20	-12	
Reports on the evaluation of the joint training sessions of parents and school directors drafted	1	0	1	2	1	-1	
Reports on the effective application and implementation of APE federations strategic plans are available for distribution.	0	0	0	7	0	-7	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
Reports on the effective application and implementation of CAPE strategic plans are available for distributon. (New)			17	6	17	11	
Strategic plans are drafted by the APE federations	0	0	0	7	0	-7	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
Strategic plans for the CAPEs are drafted (New)			17	6	17	11	
APE federation General Assembly meetings are organized	14	3	0	28	3	-25	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
CAPE General Meetings held (New)	12	6	34	24	40	16	
Study visits on infrastructure contracting procedures	2	0	11	2	11	9	
Commune contracts for infrastructure guarantee APE participation	4	0	10	4	10	6	

CASE project Outputs (Original and New)	Planned for Yr. 1	Completed Yr. 1	Now Planned Yr. 2	Originally Planned EOP	Now Planned for EOP	Difference between Original and Proposed Plans	Commentary
Training modules developed for contracting procedures	1	0	1	1	1	0	
Training modules developed for contracting procedures are made available to stakeholders	0	0	10	10	10	0	
Training sessions in participative diagnostic of education	6	6	0	6	6	0	
Diagnostic exercises carried out at primary school level	6	6	0	6	6	0	
District primary education plans drafted	6	1	5	6	6	0	
Study visit report on AME (BF) drafted	1	1	0	1	1	0	
Copies of BF report on study visit on AMEs made available	80	80	120	80	200	120	
Report of feedback workshop on the BF AME study visit	1	1	0	1	1	0	
Copies of the report on feedback workshop on the BF AME study visit made available	80	80	120	80	200	120	
AME communes selected	6	6	2	6	8	2	
Information trips on AME concept	9	12	3	9	15	6	
AME-type groups set up	35	36	20	35	56	21	
Visits to girls' education projects by AMEs	4	6	1	4	7	3	
Reports on visits to girls' education projects available to stakeholders	4	7	1	4	8	4	
AMEs and the associated APE adopt strategies for the promotion of equitable and quality education	25	36	15	25	51	26	

CASE project Outputs (Original and New)	Planned for Yr. 1	Completed Yr. 1	Now Planned Yr. 2	Originally Planned EOP	Now Planned for EOP	Difference between Original and Proposed Plans	Commentary
Trainings of WE and NGO staffs in participative diagnostics of education (PDE) at village level by AMEs and others carried out	25	41	15	25	56	31	
PDEs carried out	16	70	15	16	85	69	
Village level primary education plans drafted	12	36	10	12	46	34	
Partnerships with community radios signed	6	4	2	6	6	0	
Scripts developed	23	7	28	35	35	0	
Radio listeneres' groups organized	80	6	214	220	220	0	
Evaluation report on effective-ness of use of community radios is drafted and discussed	0	0	1	1	1	0	
AME/APE gender training modules developed	1	1	1	1	2	1	
Gender training sessions carried out	35	0	92	70	92	22	
HIV/AIDS training for APE federations	13	3	34	25	37	12	
HIV/AIDS training for APEs and AMEs	35	20	92	70	112	42	
HIV/AIDS projects funded	13	0	40	25	40	15	
AME and APE quality and equity in education projects are funded			46	36	46	10	Not planned originally
Quarterly financial reports	12	12	12	24	24	0	
Quarterly technical reports	4	4	4	8	8	0	
Annual Reports	1	0	2	2	2	0	
Project Evaluations	0	0	1	1	1	0	
Inventory completed	1	1	2	3	3	0	

CASE project Outputs (Original and New)	Planned for Yr. 1	Completed Yr. 1	Now Planned Yr. 2	Originally Planned EOP	Now Planned for EOP	Difference between Original and Proposed Plans	Commentary
Working agreements with NGOs signed	3	3	2	3	5	2	
NGO Sub-Grants signed	3	3	5	6	8	2	
Monthly meetings with NGO field agents	0	4	7	0	11	11	Not planned originally
NGO Audits	0	0	0	3	0	-3	
Contracts with APE Federations	7	0	0	7	0	-7	
Sub-grants with FEDAPEs	7	0	0	14	0	-14	See below: Yr 2 activities originally planned for federations now will take place with CAPEs
Sub-grants with CAPEs (New)			45	0	45	45	
Audits of federations	0	0	0	7	0	-7	
AME follow-up committee drafts its report	20	0	2	46	2	-44	Global reports are now planned, rather than reports on individual AMEs
Personnel recruitment	23	20	0	23	20	-3	
Personnel performance evaluations	23	0	46	46	46	0	

Conclusion

PENGOP I & II, for all its other successes, has had only a limited impact in increasing the involvement of women in the affairs of their local school. While women did make some gains in terms of the percentage of women members of APEs, it was rare that they played more than token roles. While women often made financial and in-kind contributions to school projects, their opinions were rarely considered to be important. Priorities had always been determined by men, and the women were largely marginalized in discussions concerning formal education.

World Education concluded at the end of PENGOP that only by creating the physical and organizational space where women could among themselves discuss issues concerning education could their views be elicited. As a group, rather than as individual members of the APE, they could present their priorities to the APE for consideration and insertion into the schools annual action plans. As a group, women could be recognized as a strong force in the village or neighborhood. As individuals, who had come to the village from somewhere else as the marriage partner of a village man, they were looked at as someone whose views counted for little.

The enthusiasm of women permitted us to go further and faster than envisioned in the planning stages of project activities. If this tendency is confirmed, notably after the financing of microprojets, then a significant step will be taken toward a broader participation of women in education in general and in girls' education in particular.

In spite of the difficulties encountered with the members of FENAPEB, the project staff members can congratulate themselves on progress made in institutional capacity-building. The dynamic created by the resignation of the president will inevitably further advance progress already made. With our program in the second year, we expect to strengthen the capacities of a larger number of CAPE so as to complete the project objectives through a bottom-up approach.